



# NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.  
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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## 93 MILLION AMERICANS DISCONNECTED FROM BROADBAND OPPORTUNITIES *FCC Survey Finds Cost and Digital Literacy Main Barriers to Broadband Adoption*

Washington, D.C. -- At the Brookings Institution today, the Federal Communications Commission released its National Broadband Plan Consumer Survey, [\*Broadband Adoption and Use in America\*](#), which found that affordability and lack of digital skills are the main reasons why 93 million Americans -- one-third of the country -- are not connected to high-speed Internet at home.

“We need to tackle the challenge of connecting 93 million Americans to our broadband future,” said FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski. “In the 21st century, a digital divide is an opportunity divide. To bolster American competitiveness abroad and create the jobs of the future here at home, we need to make sure that all Americans have the skills and means to fully participate in the digital economy.”

On March 17, 2010, the Federal Communications Commission will deliver a National Broadband Plan to Congress that details a strategy for connecting the country to affordable, world-class broadband. This will be a strategy for U.S. global leadership in high-speed Internet to create jobs and spur economic growth; to unleash new waves of innovation and investment; and to improve education, health care, energy efficiency, public safety, and the vibrancy of our democracy.

As part of the plan, the FCC conducted a national random digit-dial survey of adults in October and November 2009 to assess America’s attitudes toward broadband. The Consumer Survey found that 35 percent of adult Americans do not have high-speed Internet connections at home -- or approximately 80 million adults and 13 million children over the age of five.

The survey identifies three main barriers to adoption:

- **Affordability:** 36 percent of non-adopters, or 28 million adults, said they do not have home broadband because the monthly fee is too expensive (15 percent), they cannot afford a computer, the installation fee is too high (10 percent), or they do not want to enter into a long-term service contract (9 percent). According to survey respondents, their average monthly broadband bill is \$41.
- **Digital Literacy:** 22 percent of non-adopters, or 17 million adults, indicated that they do not have home broadband because they lack the digital skills (12 percent) or they are concerned about potential hazards of online life, such as exposure to inappropriate content or security of personal information (10 percent).
- **Relevance:** 19 percent of non-adopters, or 15 million adults, said they do not have broadband because they say that the Internet is a waste of time, there is no online content of interest to them or, for dial-up users, they are content with their current service.

The survey also found that non-adopters usually have more than one barrier that keeps them from having broadband service at home. Over half of non-adopters, when selecting from a menu of possible barriers to adoption, chose three or more. For example, more than half of non-adopters who cited cost also listed reasons relating to digital literacy or relevance.

“The gap in broadband adoption is a problem with many different dimensions that will require many different solutions,” said John Horrigan, Director of Consumer Research for the Omnibus Broadband Initiative. “Lowering costs of service or hardware, helping people develop online skills, and informing them about applications relevant to their lives are all key to sustainable adoption.”

The interaction of attitudes and use of communications goods and services creates four categories of non-adopters:

- **Near Converts**, who make up 30 percent of non-adopters, have the strongest tendencies toward getting broadband. They have high rates of computer ownership, positive attitudes about the Internet. Many are dial-up or “not-at-home” users, and affordability is the leading reason for non-adoption among this group. They are relatively youthful compared with other non-adopters, with a median age of 45.
- **Digital Hopefuls**, who make up 22 percent of non-adopters, like the idea of being online but lack the resources for access. Few have a computer and, among those who use one, few feel comfortable with the technology. Some 44 percent cite affordability as a barrier to adoption and they are also more likely than average to say digital literacy are a barrier. This group is heavily Hispanic and has a high share of African-Americans.
- **Digitally Uncomfortable**, who make up 20 percent of non-adopters, are the mirror image of the Digital Hopefuls; they have the resources for access but not a bright outlook on what it means to be online. Nearly all of the Digitally Uncomfortable have computers, but they lack the skills to use them and have tepid attitudes toward the Internet. This group reports all three barriers: affordability, digital literacy, and relevance.
- **Digitally Distant**, who make up 28 percent of non-adopters, do not see the point of being online. Few in this group see the Internet as a tool for learning and most see it as a dangerous place for children. This is an older group (the median age is 63), nearly half are retired and half say that either relevance or digital literacy are barriers to adoption.

The Consumer Survey interviewed 5,005 adult Americans between October 19 and November 23, 2009. The margin of error based on results based on the entire sample is plus or minus 1.6 percentage points. The survey included an over-sample of non-adopters, resulting in interviews of 2,334 adults who are not broadband users at home. The margin of error for results based on non-adopters is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points. Interviewers conducting the survey provide a Spanish-language option for respondents wishing to take the survey in Spanish.

**To read *Broadband Adoption and Use in America*, visit:**

**[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/DOC-296442A1.pdf](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-296442A1.pdf)**